

## AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Conducted by Hubert McBean Johnstone

### SUMMER PHOTOGRAPHY ALONG THE BEACHES.

H. McBean Johnstone.

Ten years ago the sea-side visitor who carried a camera was the exception; now it is the other way round, and it is the exceptional one who does not possess one of those deadly little black boxes so dreaded by the pretty girl when she is coming out of the surf. If the summer man does not own a camera when he decides where he is going to put in the summer, he goes out and blows himself to one and takes his first lesson along the sands. It is in this way that so many well known amateurs have started on the downward path, for once they are thoroughly interested, it is only a matter of time until they are able to talk plates, and paper, and composition, and effect, and what not, as unintelligibly as the oldest and most hardened in the ranks. And if they persist in their evil ways and are not saved by some good missionary in the form of one who has been through it all, they will likely get a picture of Aunt Susan and little Mary Ann, in their bathing suits, into one of the papers and then, of course, their names are made,—they are famous.

But joking apart, there are, along the seashore, many little episodes forever happening that are well worthy of a dry plate, if one can only get them, and along the banks many phases of beautiful nature that can be translated into pictures full of life and realism, that others can look at and enjoy. Only, to get these things, you have to be a little more than a mere button presser. For instance, in looking over the album of one of these press-the-button fellows, what a similarity we see between two different workers in this branch. Not that there should not be a similarity provided that the work is good, but as a rule these productions are anything but that. In most cases improvement is possible.

First on the list of subjects that come under the head of beach photographs is the everlasting picture of groups of summer boarders. Now the summer boarder is not, as a rule, a work of art—unless it be a she,—but nevertheless, so associated is he with numberless good times that any collection in which he did not take some place would be lacking in that human interest so necessary to make the photograph worth looking at. You know it is the associations that we group around the taking of a picture that makes it valuable to us. If you do not believe that, just consider for an instant how much more interest you take in your own work than in the work of someone else, and then ask yourself the reason for it. So the summer man takes first place easily enough in this direction. Then, as a sub-division of this class of work, we have the portraying of little children busily engaged in the building of miniature strongholds in the plastic sand and shaping out, in their own imaginations, buildings too vast for the grown-up mind to conceive. And here we can get something really artistic and well worthy of a little careful study in grouping and arrangement. But it is a kind of work that one has to be thoroughly in love with to make a success of, and it is also necessary to have more or less of a knowledge of children. Somehow, you have to keep them from looking at you and engrossed in their play, or the picture will be worthless from

a pictorial standpoint. Perhaps the best plan is to have some one with you to take the youngsters' minds off the instrument. It is a study in patience as well as photography, but looking at it from either point of view, it is well worthy of a little careful attention.

Or perhaps it will be possible to catch them romping over and around a bit of wreck which has been cast up on the shore, and by the action of innumerable fierce nor'westers been almost buried in the ever shifting sands. Alone it might not be a thing of beauty, but take it when a lot of merry little imps make it a scene of life and enjoyment and at once it gives to the picture that appearance of "something doing," so to speak, and takes away that look of the photograph being merely made to show the print to the doting parents. Or again, get them sitting with the fishermen, listening to marvellous sea yarns of mermaids and devil fish and what not, while the sly old salts wink gravely at one another and lose no time in keeping at their work of mending their nets. Such photographs are worthy to be dignified by the name of studies, and if the idea is properly carried out will form a welcome addition to the stock of lantern slides that your club is getting up for next winter. At once, after the summer is over, they take on a sort of dignity that it would never be possible for Katie Jones in her bathing suit to attain.

Then, too, these same fishermen with their supernaturally grave faces and shiny rubber boots, are, if you catch them at work, well worth a bit of attention. Go out in their boats with them and get them at work lifting the nets, and snap pictures of the great masses of slimy writhing fish as they quiver and glisten in the sunlight and then pour in an almost steady stream into the big flat-bottomed boat. It is great sport. The work takes place in the morning before the fog has yet fairly risen of the surface of the water, and when the sun is just climbing up over the barely distinguishable horizon. The boat rocks on the gentle morning roll of the water as it guggles under the bow, and were it not for the hoarse oaths of men, it might be almost a fit time for a reverie, so peaceful is it all.

Or walk along the beach with the camera and catch the roll of the tide as it comes in, its vanguard breaking on the smooth sand and other wavelets following, flowing over the top of them as though they had never existed. Here and there is perhaps a sand-piper that will give life to the scene and save it from an appearance of utter desolation. O! what a wealth of studies there are to be found along the shore.

But to pass on. Marine photography might be said to form a branch of along shore work during the summer months, and while it would be impossible to touch on it here, in so confined a space, and give anything like practical instructions on it, still it is just as well to bring it to mind. The general rules to be followed are to remember to use a large plate, a quick lens and a sunny day, when it will be possible to get some kind of gradation in your sails and prevent that flat look so common to the poorer specimens of this branch. And then speaking of flatness, it might not be amiss to just mention that if there were two or three boats included in the view, instead of just one, there is a less likelihood of there being a lack of perspective. In seascapes, where there are not any trees to show the effect of distance, there is a great danger of the photograph not being divided into planes and failing to show distance as it should. Several boats in a view effectually prevent this fault.

In marine photography it is a lucky fellow who owns a camera where the shutter works outside the lens, for then there